

Coprosma petiolata

COMMON NAME

taupata

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1856)

FAMILY

Rubiaceae

AUTHORITY

Coprosma petiolata Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

COPPTL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2004 | Range Restricted

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Shrub or small tree bearing pairs of green very glossy leaves inhabiting the Kermadec Islands. Twigs and stems of leaves slightly fuzzy. Leaves 10–70mm long, leathery, widest towards the blunt tip. Small triangular dark-tipped flap on stem between leaf pairs.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Kermadec Islands, Raoul Island and most of the adjacent Herald Islets.

HABITAT

Coastal. On rock stacks, islets, coastal cliffs and associated talus slopes and boulder field, a common and sometimes dominant component of coastal scrub and an understorey shrub in the more exposed dry forests of the island. Also locally common on the exposed slopes of the Raoul Island crater walls.



Raoul Island. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Raoul Island. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Date taken: 10/05/2009, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Prostrate, spreading or erect shrub or widely spreading tree up to 6 m tall but usually much less; branches with rough dark to light grey bark; branchlets slender, pubescent. Leaves on slender pubescent petioles 5-16 mm long. Stipules short, triangular, pubescent, acute. Lamina coriaceous, light yellow-green in exposed situations with a distinct waxy bloom, or green in shaded sites, glossy, 10-70 × 15-30 mm (70-80 × 45-50 mm in shade plants or juveniles), elliptic-oblong to obovate, obtuse, cuneately narrowed to base; margins recurved in exposed situations otherwise flat, reticulated veins evident below. Male flowers clustered on slender peduncles 5-10 mm long; calyx 0; corolla funnelform, lobes oblong-triangular, acute, more or less = tube. Female usually 3 together on slender pubescent peduncles; calyx-teeth very short; corolla-tube broadly tubular, long, lobes subacute, < tube. Drupe 6-10 × 6-10 mm orange-red, ovoid or subdidymous.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to *Coprosma* species of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

Of the New Zealand species it is most similar to *Coprosma repens* which is purportedly present on the Kermadec Islands (based on several old and somewhat dubious collections which may or may not be it). *Coprosma repens* differs mostly by its much larger (60-80 × 40-50 mm cf. 10-70 × 15-30 mm in *C. petiolata*), thicker, more coriaceous, glossy dark green leaves but the distinction is not always exact, though *C. petiolata* plants never have the thick, coriaceous, dark green, glossy leaves typical of *C. repens*. *Coprosma petiolata* is actually more similar to the now scarce Norfolk Island endemic *C. baueri* from which it mostly differs by its larger overall stature and by its obtuse rather than retuse-emarginate leaf tip. Critical study using modern molecular techniques would be useful in this obviously closely related group of species.

FLOWERING

September - April

FRUITING

December - May

LIFE CYCLE

Fleshy drupes are dispersed by frugivory (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed or semi-hardwood cuttings. Frost-tender. An attractive hardy shrub for a coastal situation. Not widely cultivated in New Zealand.

THREATS

An abundant endemic that is listed only because it is an island endemic. On Raoul it occasionally hybridises with *Coprosma acutifolia*.

ETYMOLOGY

coprosma: From the Greek kopros 'dung' and osme 'smell', referring to the foul smell of the species, literally 'dung smell'

petiolata: Having leaf-stalks

ATTRIBUTION

Description mostly adapted from Allan (1961) However, parts of the description have been modified using fresh specimens collected from Raoul in May 2009.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Allan, H.H. 1961: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I, Government Printer, Wellington.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11: 285-309

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/coprosma-petiolata/>